

Analysis of the Management Structure of the Murray City Fire Department

Executive Planning

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ABSTRACT

The increased demands of the fire service over the past years have fire department managers searching for more effective and efficient ways to manage fire department services. Heavy work loads have forced chief officers to perform multiple administrative duties.

The purpose of this project was to examine the management structure of the Murray City Fire Department and to identify alternate structures, methods and schedules for chief officers.

An evaluative research method was utilized to study the following questions:

- Does the current structure meet the needs of the department?**
- Are there more effective scheduling options for chief officers?**
- Should the battalion chiefs remain a part of the engine companies?**
- Should the assistant chief retain a dual role of fire marshal and operations chief?**

The procedures involved were (a) the study of other EFOP participants by the battalion chiefs in the department, with a request for feedback; and (b) a telephone survey of thirteen surrounding departments on how they were structured.

The results indicated that the Murray battalion chiefs were more concerned with personal schedules than they were about improvement of the department. It was inconclusive as to whether or not changes in battalion chiefs' work schedule

would increase productivity. It was clear, however, that some structure changes were in order. It was determined that battalion chiefs should not double as company officers, and that a fire marshal should not double as an operations chief.

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Recommendations resulting from this project were (a) replacement of the 24-hour battalion chiefs with captains, (b) upgrade the position of training officer to battalion chief and better utilize him in management, and (c) create a “day shift” battalion chief to serve as operations chief OR promote a deputy fire marshal to fire marshal and allow the assistant chief to serve as operations chief.

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INTRODUCTION

As the world rapidly changes, fire service managers are attempting to keep pace with rapid changes in the way services are delivered and in the way that “business is conducted.” Standards and regulations, which are increasing in scope and complexity, have fire department leaders devoting increased time and energy to areas of management that were of little or no concern to previous administrations.

The nature of the problem is that the management structure of the Murray City Fire Department has not kept pace with the demands imposed by the increasing delivery of services, both in quantity as well as variety. The battalion chiefs, who are assigned to 24 hour shifts, are utilized in a dual role as shift commander and as company officer. The assistant chief is utilized in a dual role as operations chief and fire marshal. There are problems with information dissemination and communications in general.

The purpose of this project is to analyze the management structure of the Murray City Fire Department and to identify alternate management structures, methods and schedules to determine if there are more effective ways in which to utilize management personnel. This project will result in a recommended plan to be submitted to the chief of the department.

An evaluative research method was utilized in this project to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the current management structure. Questions to be

considered are:

1. Does the current structure meet the needs of the department?
2. Are there more effective scheduling options for chief officers?
3. Should the battalion chiefs remain a part of the engine company?
4. Should the assistant chief retain a dual role of fire marshal and operations chief?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The traditional fire department was organized to extinguish fires. Fire chiefs have historically directed the operations of the fire suppression efforts, utilizing a quasi-military organization. The majority of fire departments in America began as volunteer organizations. As the fire service has evolved over the years, the fire chief has become more and more an administrator, seldom found at fire scenes, except those of major impact or involving loss of life. Company officers are in place to command single unit responses and battalion chiefs generally command most multiple engine responses.

Changes in the services provided by fire departments have required support and administrative staffs which are larger than those required years ago. The fire service has experienced the addition of emergency medical services (EMS), hazardous materials response and confined space rescues, as well as many technical and complicated laws and standards relating to firefighter health

and safety, physical fitness programs, and fair labor standards. These, along with fire prevention programs, public education programs, and citizen emergency response training (CERT) have left today's fire service manager with many more administrative duties than the fire chiefs of 20 years ago had to deal with. A fire chief can no longer single-handedly manage an effective fire department. He or she must have an adequate staff of competent managers.

The following is the mission statement of the Murray City Fire Department:

The mission of the Murray City Fire Department is to provide highly effective services in response to emergencies; fire prevention and safety, and public education. We will accomplish this through respect for citizens and one another, encouragement of progress, maintaining high standards, and continuous training and preparation.

The Murray City Fire Department was organized in 1908 as a volunteer organization with a mission to provide fire suppression services to a town located in the center of the Salt Lake Valley. The department today consists of thirty-three (33) full time suppression personnel working a three-platoon system (eleven per platoon), manning the city's three fire stations on a twenty-four hour basis. The battalion chief is both the shift commander and company officer at fire station one. Stations two and three have a captain as company officer. The full time personnel are supplemented by twenty part time personnel who sign up to work shifts on a monthly basis. The department is commanded by a fire chief, who also has the

responsibility of the city's emergency management program. The administrative staff consists of the fire chief, an assistant chief, a training officer, three battalion chiefs, and two secretaries. The assistant chief, who is assigned to eight hour days/40 hours a week, has a dual role as operations chief and fire marshal. The fire marshal oversees a fire prevention bureau of two deputy fire marshals. The training officer is responsible for the coordination of department training programs as well as the department safety program. The training/safety officer reports to the assistant chief on training issues and directly to the chief on safety issues. The training officer is a relatively new position, added in 1996. The training officer has no supervisory responsibilities, and is a rank that is inferior to the battalion chief, but superior to the captains. The battalion chiefs work a traditional 56 hour per week/24 hour day schedule, managing the operations of a platoon, as well as functioning as a company officer.

Prior to 1979, operations were directed by an assistant chief working a 40 hour/5 day per week schedule, and the fire marshal was a separate, full-time position. From 1979 to 1982, the assistant chief position was replaced by a day shift, 40 hour week battalion chief. In 1982, when the battalion chief position was converted back to assistant chief, the responsibilities of the fire marshal were added to the assistant chief. It is likely that this was done because the fire marshal was the individual that was promoted to assistant chief.

The problems encountered in the current structure are as follows:

- **The assistant chief must juggle the responsibilities of managing fire department operations (fire suppression, EMS response, budgets, rules & regulations, and clerical staff) with the responsibility of managing the fire prevention bureau (plan reviews, inspections, investigations, permits, complaints & violations). Code enforcement has become a highly technical and time-intensive area of the fire service. Codes are more sophisticated and complex, and as they evolve into performance-based codes, the position of fire marshal will require even more expertise and a greater time commitment. Due to the many and varied responsibilities, the assistant chief has become a crisis manager.**
- **The battalion chiefs must juggle the responsibilities of managing the on-duty platoon with the responsibilities of a company officer, and also oversee an assigned area of responsibility in the department (apparatus, communications, buildings & grounds, EMS) and manage the assignments given in those areas. Committees were formed in each of these areas, but problems are encountered with committees. Committees made up of individuals on different shifts experience difficulty in coordinating meetings, and two-thirds of the committee members have to be paid overtime to meet. It also becomes easy for the battalion chief to abdicate his responsibilities to the committees.**
- **Although he works an 8-hour day/40-hour week, the training officer is a**

subordinate position in grade and pay to the battalion chief. This creates difficulty in communicating assignments in the areas of training and safety, since the training officer must go through the assistant chief to make training assignments to suppression personnel through the battalion chiefs.

- Communication, particularly across platoons, is a significant problem with the current management structure. The battalion chiefs take information discussed in administrative meetings and deliver it to their individual platoons with their own "spin" on it. This results in inconsistency between the shifts and often results in confusion by lower level officers and firefighters who communicate with members of other platoons at their respective stations. This frequently results in calls to the assistant chiefs' office to provide clarification. Concerns and recommendations from the platoons to the administration typically have the same "spin" by the battalion chiefs as described above. The effect is that the battalion chief level of the department has become somewhat of a "filter" to information in both directions.

Analyzing, planning, and organizing the management structure of the department are consistent with the leadership, organizational skills, and planning modules learned and reinforced in the *Executive Planning* class at the National Fire Academy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review was to find what other authors have learned concerning management structures and alternate schedules for chief officers. The literature reviewed for this project consists of management books written for the fire service as well as those written for general management, trade journals, and research papers by other EFOP participants authored on the subject of alternate scheduling for fire department officers.

In his book, *Fire Department Management: Scope and Method*, David B. Gratz describes the importance of organization in terms to which any fire service member can relate. Mr. Gratz writes:

Organization is to management what fire apparatus is to the engineer, and organization is the vehicle which management must use in order to accomplish objectives. Obviously, the finest fire apparatus will perform poorly without a competent operator. The fact remains that maximum efficiency and economy can only be achieved where we can, if at all possible, provide both the qualified engineer (manager) and the modern machinery (organization). It is essential, therefore, that modern fire department management have an organizational structure as modern and well maintained as the newest fire apparatus (Gratz, 1972, p. 113).

Efficient use of personnel within the management structure is also critical.

“The focus of business improvement efforts, over the past few decades, has been gradually shifting away from improvements in technology and towards more effective use of human resources” (Utah System of Higher Education, 1997, section 3, p. 1).

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), “The manner in which fire departments are organized depends on the size and the scope of its operations” (NFPA, 1991, p. 9-39). The organizational structure of the Murray Fire Department should be consistent with the typical structure of a small department as outlined by NFPA (NFPA, 1991, p. 9-38). (See Appendix A.) The scope of the fire department is not what is in question, but the most effective and appropriate structure of management is the focus.

Many fire service managers talk a great deal about change and progress, but are reluctant to actually make changes of any significance, particularly if the change affects them personally. A current leader in change in the fire service is Chief William J. Hewitt of the Saskatoon, Canada, Fire Department. Chief Hewitt’s book *Recreating the Fire Service* contains current ideas and strategies for managing fire department operations. Chief Hewitt advises:

Manage the important, not the urgent. In an organization responsible for managing emergencies, this sounds like an oxymoron. Every fire officer must be effective at managing the urgent. The point that needs to be made, however, is that effective management requires effective time management.

If officers are continually practicing crisis management they can never be effective (even on a fire ground). As was discussed before, every officer must plan the year, plan the month, plan the week, and plan the day, in order to be effective. Once the plan is set, it should be flexible and realistic and should prevent the crisis management syndrome (Hewett, 1995, p.69).

Imbalanced work loads may contribute to individuals becoming crisis managers. Dr. Stephen R. Covey refers to this as time spent in “Quadrant I” of the “Time Management Matrix,” meaning time spent on “urgent, important activities,” such as “crises, pressing problems, and deadline-driven projects.” It is more desirable for managers to spend the majority of their time in “Quadrant II,” which is time spent on “important, not urgent activities.” These would include activities such as “prevention, PC activities, relationship building, recognizing new opportunities, planning, and recreation” (Covey, 1990, p.151).

The Certified Public Manager Curriculum (State of Utah, System of Higher Education) identifies some of the more common mistakes that haunt many government organizations in designing the organizational structure of the establishment. They include:

- Overlapping supervisory responsibilities.
- No clearly identified supervisor.
- Too many employees to supervise.
- Advisor or technical assistant relations that are unclear.

- **Imbalanced workloads.**
- **Unnecessary positions.**
- **Positions supervised by people that are too high in the organization.**

Sometimes these mistakes are not readily apparent until you attempt to draw an organizational chart (Utah System of Higher Education, 1997, section 2, pp. 25-26).

A change in work schedules for chief officers who have worked a traditional 56 hour per week shift schedule is an adjustment that meets with resistance by those officers. There is substantial debate over the wisdom of such schedule changes. One researcher concluded that “tradition was a factor in determining the Shift Commander’s schedule” (Tyrrell, 1995, p. iii). Tyrrell also suggests that the Shift Commander’s traditional schedule “may have evolved past the need for a supervisory level individual to be present at all times (and) that employees can be empowered to conduct assigned activities without this level of oversight” (Tyrrell, 1995, p. 23). Gratz summarizes this paradox of resistance to change as follows:

One of the most interesting contradictions in human nature is its ambivalence toward things new and different. Most of us strive year in and year out to obtain something new and hopefully better in our personal lives. We work hard for that new home, new car, new clothes, better position and increased social status. All of this, basically, is the desire for change- to move up to something better. But, even while we seek such changes for

the better in our personal lives, many of us are equally intense in *resisting* organizational changes (Gratz, 1972, p. 122).

Gratz also points out, in the chapter entitled “Guidelines for Organizing the Organization” that:

Every effort should be made to keep the chain of command as short as possible. Fire departments which have an excessive number of layers in the organization will find it difficult to communicate from top to bottom and vice versa. Every additional layer in an organization serves as a filter screening out vital information the chief wants even the newest (firefighter) to have (Gratz, 1972, pp. 135-136).

In a three-part series on leading and managing change in the fire service, Chief Randy R. Bruegman identifies one obstacle in the fire service as follows:

One of the obstacles we need to overcome from an organizational standpoint is getting our personnel to look past the four walls of the fire station. They need to understand that the world around us is changing and placing new demands on the fire chief, the captain, the lieutenant, the firefighter and the organization itself. Understanding the change-resistant nature of our culture, therefore, helps us lead change within our organizations and for the fire service as a whole (Bruegman, 1997, p.86).

The importance of coordination and cooperation is emphasized by Harry Carter and Erwin Rausch, who state that “Coordination and cooperation between

shifts in a department is extremely important. At the higher levels the need to coordinate and achieve cooperation is even greater because several companies or different bureaus might be involved” (Carter & Rausch, 1993, p. 81). Murray Fire Department battalion chiefs struggle with administrative assignments that are outside of normal engine company operations. The following observation was made by Timothy J. Kluck in analyzing his own organization. “Fire department staff officers are experiencing problems with their ability to adequately administer department programs when assigned to twenty-four hour work schedules” (Kluck, 1994, p.1). But altering work schedules of chief officers is not always an easy task. A survey conducted by Bruce Van Cleemput reveals that “ . . . it is clear that this issue is controversial” (Van Cleemput, 1994, p.17). Van Cleemput also acknowledges the following:

One of the unexpected findings revealed was the desire of line personnel who are currently on a twenty-four hour work schedule wishing to promote to a Chief Officer rank but when the department offers an eight to five, 40 hour work schedule the interest of the rank and file diminishes significantly (Van Cleemput, 1994, pp. 16-17).

Yet fire department chief officers continue to struggle with the challenge of administration of programs by personnel who are only at work an average of ten days per month. "After reviewing the literature findings and survey results, the author has found that the current system does not meet the needs of this

department, and that department duties/programs are not being adequately administered under the current system." (Kluck, 1994, p. 14).

PROCEDURES

The three battalion chiefs of the Murray Fire Department were each given copies of research papers written by several EFOP participants relating to schedule changes for chief officers. They were instructed to read the papers, and respond to the assistant chief with their thoughts and feelings concerning the concept of improving operations by utilizing a more efficient schedule for the battalion chiefs. The papers issued to the battalion chiefs included:

1. Nicholl, G. W., *District Managers - A Different Approach to Fire Department Management*, 1989
2. Kluck, T. J., *Staff Officers Scheduling Issues and Their Impact Upon the Administration of Duties*, 1994
3. Tallon, T. J., *Redesign of the Battalion Chief Position in the Salt Lake City Fire Department*, 1996
4. Tyrrell, D. E., *A Study of the Traditional Work Schedule for Shift Commanders*, 1995
5. Van Cleemput, B., *Alternate Work Schedules for Chief Officers*, 1994
6. Vorlander, P.C., *An Innovative Approach to Staffing for Fire Service Management and Incident Command*, 1992

The battalion chiefs were given three months to study the information in the reports and to submit a recommendation. During the same period of time, the

chief and assistant chief reviewed the same documents.

During this period of time, an extensive 40-hour mandatory management training course was presented to all officers in the department. It was the intention of the administration to assist the captains and battalion chiefs to view their positions as more than just fire ground commanders, but as all-around supervisors and managers, and most important, leaders.

The limitations of this method are that only those who are affected by a change in scheduling and/or administrative assignments were surveyed within the department. This has a potential effect of heavy personal bias in lieu of complete honesty in what is most effective for the department. An informal survey of those individuals at lower levels of the organization indicates that most individuals are more concerned with how organizational changes will affect their future promotions than in how they will improve department efficiency in the present.

At the end of the three-month period, the assistant chief drafted a proposed change in administrative duties that would have no impact on the battalion chiefs work schedule, but would remove them from engine company operations. (See Appendix B.) This should not have been a controversial proposal, as it put the battalion chiefs in line with battalion chiefs in most other departments that work a traditional twenty-four hour schedule, but it met with resistance. The main objections to this plan were, (1) no company officer would be assigned to the engine company housed in the same station as the battalion chief, making the

engineer responsible for the engine, and (2) staffing would be supplemented by a combination of part-time employees, along with a modification in the vacation policy that would place a restriction on the number of personnel who could be off on vacation at a time.

A telephone survey was initiated to gather data from local fire departments concerning the positions of fire marshal, battalion chief, and training officer. The departments involved in this survey were Bountiful City, Layton City, Logan City, Ogden City, Orem City, Park City, Provo City, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Sandy City, South Salt Lake City, West Jordan City and West Valley City. These departments were chosen because they are all full time departments in the same geographical area as Murray City. The questions asked of these departments were:

1. Do you have a full-time fire marshal who's primary responsibility is the fire prevention bureau?
2. What level of the organization is the operations chief, and what schedule do they work?
3. Does your battalion chief ride on the engine as a company officer?
4. Do you have a full-time training officer? If so, what rank is the individual?

RESULTS

BATTALION CHIEFS

For the purpose of this paper, the battalion chiefs will be referred to as “Battalion Chief A,” “Battalion Chief B,” and “Battalion Chief C.” Almost immediately following the assignment to review and report, “Battalion Chief A” began submitting rebuttals to the concepts outlined in the papers. He wanted to exhaust any other options before making a change in the battalion chief work schedule, and his memos were almost impassioned pleas to do anything but change the work schedule. He cited one reason for opposition to the change as “(it) would have a considerable negative impact on me and my lifestyle.” He subsequently submitted seven work schedules for consideration:

Work Schedule 1

The entire department, with the exception of the chief, works an alternating work schedule. It consists of twelve teams of three persons alternating between ten hour days and twenty-four hour shifts. The ten hours days are worked during the week as well as the alternating 24 hours shifts. Teams 1 - 6 would work 06:00 to 16:00 Monday through Thursday, teams 7 - 12 would work 14:00 to 24:00 Tuesday through Friday. Each team would be headed by an officer and given a particular area in which to specialize (prevention, training, haz mat, etc.). The twenty-four hour crews would work from 07:00 to 07:00. Team 12 would not have an assigned officer and would be staffed

with senior firefighters who are on the promotional list. The most hours worked in a one week period would be 64, and the least hours worked would be 34. The average hours worked in a two-week pay period would be 104 (or 52 hours per week). The overlap would have coverage during the highest call volume periods. The ten hour crews would get all holidays off.

Advantages: A number of firefighters would be available for work associated with suppression and a crew would be available for other projects.

Disadvantages: An obvious lack of manpower on the weekends and holidays.

Work Schedule 2

Identical to number one except that each member of team 12 would work an alternating 24 hour schedule (24 on - 48 off). Their presence would help augment the 24-hour crew.

Advantage: There would be a four person, 24 hour crew.

Disadvantage: Still an obvious lack of manpower on weekends.

Work Schedule 3

Identical to number one, except the assistant chief and deputy fire marshals would work the traditional 8/40 schedule while all the other officers would lead a three-person team, except team 11 would consist of senior grade firefighters.

Advantages: More people would be permanently assigned to fire prevention.

Disadvantages: Once again, minimal staffing on weekends.

Work Schedule 4

Identical to number three except the officers would be on the rotating schedule. The firefighters would stay on their respective 24-hour shifts and the officers would be assigned a particular crew for the ten hour day. Once again the shifts would overlap to provide maximum coverage during peak hours.

Advantages: More coverage on weekends, although overall coverage would diminish. Officers would be available to work on their special projects during the week.

Disadvantages: Crew size would be compromised at times and officers would not always be available.

Work Schedule 5

Identical to schedule 4 except that the chief, assistant chief and deputy fire marshals all work the traditional 8/40. All other officers work the alternating schedule. Suppression crews work traditional 24-hour shifts.

Advantages: Same as above.

Work Schedule 6

The officer staff consists of four chief officers. The training officer and one

deputy fire marshal would be placed on shift to even out the crews.

“Battalion Chief C” would work Monday through Thursday (10 hour days)

and “Battalion Chief B” would work Tuesday through Friday (10 hour days).

“Battalion Chief C” would be on call Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and every other Wednesday. “Battalion Chief B” would be on call every other

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. “Battalion Chief A” would take a voluntary demotion to Captain to “facilitate operational efficiency.”

Advantages: Greatest coverage of suppression crews. Only one promotion would be required to insure each shift had adequate coverage of officers.

Disadvantages: It is questionable as to whether this would be any more efficient than our current operation.

Work Schedule 7

Identical to work schedule 1 except that teams 1 - 6 would work Sunday through Wednesday, while teams 7 - 12 would work Wednesday through Saturday. All of the schedules could be modified to fit this general profile.

Advantages: Greater amount of coverage on the weekends. Minimum staffing would be 12, maximum staffing would be 30.

Disadvantage: At least one crew would be without an officer until a promotion.

“Battalion Chief B” submitted a one page memo just prior to the deadline stating his opposition to the idea of changing the schedule at all, and suggested that the objectives of the department could be met utilizing the current schedule, although not giving any specifics on how it would be accomplished. He also indicated that none of the proposed schedules offered by the “Battalion Chief A” would be acceptable. Both “Battalion Chief A” and “Battalion Chief B” cited the Salt Lake City program as a failure, and as a reason to not implement changes in our own organization. “Battalion Chief C” gave no response.

TELEPHONE SURVEY

The results of the telephone survey are shown in table 1 on the following page. Only two departments in the survey (15.4%) had an operations chief with a dual role as fire marshal, and one of them (South Salt Lake City) is currently undergoing a restructuring that will change that. Although there are no departments that have a battalion chief on the engine, there are two (South Salt Lake City and Layton City) that utilize a Captain as shift commander, with lieutenants as company officer at their station two. Only seven on the 13 departments (53.8%) have a full-time training officer that is not on a 24-shift assignment.

Table 1, Results of phone survey.

	Full-Time Fire Marshal?	Operations Chief	Is Battalion Chief on Engine?	Training Officer
Bountiful City	YES	Deputy Chief - 8 hour day	NO B/C's	YES -24 hour Captain
Layton City	YES	Assistant Chief - 8 hour day	See Note 1	NO ²
Logan City	YES	Assistant Chief - 8 hour day	NO	YES - Assistant Chief
Ogden City	YES	Battalion Chief - 24 hour shift	NO	YES - Deputy Chief
Orem City	YES	Battalion Chief - 24 hour shift	NO	YES - Battalion Chief
Park City	YES	Assistant Chief - 8 hour day	NO	NO ³
Provo City	YES	Assistant Chief - 8 hour day	NO	YES - Battalion Chief
Salt Lake City	YES ⁴	Deputy Chief - 8 hour day	NO	YES - Battalion Chief ⁵
Salt Lake	YES	Deputy Chief - 8 hour day	NO	YES - Battalion Chief
Sandy City	YES	Deputy Chief - 8 hour day	NO	YES - Battalion Chief
South Salt Lake	NO ⁶	Fire Chief - 8 hour day	See Note 1	YES -24 hour Captain
West Jordan	YES	Battalion Chief - 8 hour day	NO	YES - Captain
West Valley City	NO ⁷	Deputy Chief - 8 hour day	NO	YES - Captain

Notes:

1. No Battalion Chief, the shift commander is a Captain who is on the engine.
2. Training is coordinated by the Assistant Chief through the station captains.
3. Training is coordinated by a "Training Focus Committee" chaired by a captain.
4. S.L.C. fire marshal is a battalion chief (see note 5).
5. All Salt Lake City Battalion Chiefs work three 24 hour shifts per month.
6. Fire Chief is also fire marshal (plans to change this are currently in the works).
7. Deputy Chief is fire marshal.

It is interesting to note that in the Park City case, a 40-hour week/8 hour day battalion chief who resigned has not been replaced, and a "training focus committee" was formed to fill that void. It has had the effect of "flattening" the organization and, according to Park City Fire Chief Kelly Gee, has been very

successful (K. Gee, personal interview, March 13, 1998).

DISCUSSION

It is apparent that any significant changes in fire department culture are controversial. When asking the question, “does the current management structure meet the needs of the department?” it becomes obvious that the question is interpreted as “does the structure meet my personal needs within the department?” It is interesting to note that none of the proposed work schedules submitted by “Battalion Chief A” proposed to remove him personally from the engine nor put him on a “day shift” schedule. When asked to review what other authors have written concerning alternate work schedules, and make recommendations on how chief officers can be better utilized, “Battalion Chief A” submitted seven complicated and confusing work schedules that affected the entire organization. It is possible that this was done to illustrate that it would be easier to leave things the way they are, as well as suggest radical schedules for all firefighters that would cause significant upheaval in the department, making the change virtually impossible to implement in a hostile environment. “Battalion Chief B” simply waited to see what someone else would propose, and then expressed opposition to it, an indication that no changes were desired. The lack of response from “Battalion Chief C” suggests that he may feel that simply ignoring the problem may make it go away. It is apparent that talking about change and

progress is much easier to do than to implement change, particularly in higher levels of the organization.

It is clear that there are as many ideas on how to schedule chief officers as there are chief officers. Are there more effective scheduling options for chief officers? It appears that the issue of effectiveness is not so much an issue of scheduling as it is an issue of commitment. Chief officers who are committed to the mission of the department can make things happen regardless of the schedule. Those who care primarily about themselves and have a minimum commitment to the organization will not make a difference no matter what the work schedule is. As one battalion chief responded, “simply putting (battalion chiefs) on days doesn’t make them more productive.” This is reinforced by the fact that several minor structural changes have been attempted over the last three years in an effort to overcome “excuses” for lack of performance in specific areas, but none of these changes have had much of an effect on the overall operations. For example, it was expressed that poor vehicle maintenance checks were the result of a lack of time in the morning, so the shift change time was adjusted to one hour earlier. This has not resulted in better maintenance, as scheduling was not the root cause of the problem.

An example of this concept is illustrated by Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith from a “disguised company” they refer to as “Brandywine” in describing “the corrosive effect on individuals and teams of a weak performance ethic”

(Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 179). In citing the problems at Brandywine, Katzenbach and Smith illustrate the importance of having the support of line management:

Six months after starting, the task force produced a series of exciting recommendations that the president accepted and *turned over to line management for implementation* [italics added]. But, unfortunately, the handoff was badly fumbled. For the most part, the line managers did not share the . . . commitment to performance. Many of them were from the old school, which at Brandywine meant a much weaker performance orientation. They resisted. And . . . nearly all major recommendations were effectively stymied (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, pp. 191-192).

When offered a simple change by the assistant chief, one of moving the battalion chiefs to a command vehicle without altering their work schedule, the battalion chiefs found multiple reasons why this plan would not work, and offered no substantive alternatives. At least two of the battalion chiefs perceive that an officer who is not on the engine is, as one battalion chief describes, “a glorified secretary or parts boy.”

As critical as organizational structure is to the success of the department, it is clear that it is not the most important element. Katzenbach and Smith cite another disguised firm they refer to as the advertising agency of “Scintil & Cleve” (S&C). S&C chose to try to bring about change with a series of structural

modifications, new individual responsibilities, and different management processes (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 204). In describing S&C's reorganization, Katzenbach and Smith state:

In shaping organizational responses to their challenge, however, the top three leaders chose to use approaches more typical of normal change than major change. They restructured the top management committee of the agency, assigned a handful of individuals new roles, and called for some new management processes aimed at encouraging joint account planning. No team-based contributions emerged during the year-long period prior to the reorganization, and no teams were asked to have any role following it.

The change focused strictly on individual accountability. The impact of S&C's reorganization, though positive, paled in comparison to the changes at DH&S. Several years later, S&C continued to face the need for major change. Not surprisingly, it's performance also continued to drift. . .

(Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, pp. 104-205).

A commitment to the success of the organization is at least as important, if not more so, than the structure itself.

Should the battalion chief remain a part of the engine company? In analysis of this question, it is clear that the strong majority (11 of 13 or 84.6%) of the departments surveyed have recognized the need to separate the shift commander from the engine company operations. It makes little sense to pay administrative

wages to a chief officer who spends the majority of his/her time on engine company officer functions. During 1996, the engine company to which the Murray battalion chief is assigned responded to 1138 emergency medical calls. Assuming an average of 30 minutes per call, the time spent on these calls amounted to approximately 569 hours. This equates to 20% of the battalion chiefs' on-duty time (including sleeping time). It is simply not an effective use of a chief officer to respond on single engine medical calls. It is common for the battalion chief on duty to leave an administrative meeting to respond to a minor medical call. Often the engine company is waiting idly for the battalion chief while he meets with the assistant chief or performs other administrative functions, leaving the engine company unproductive. But most often the engine company functions take priority. Typically in the Murray Fire Department, the first arriving officer takes command of the fire scene. In the majority of cases, that officer remains in command for the entire incident. Therefore, if the battalion chief is not on the first arriving engine, he is operating with either his engine company on fireground functions, or he becomes an extra body at the command post.

Two of the three Murray battalion chiefs admitted that there is some merit to the idea of a separate battalion chief command vehicle, but all expressed concerns of leaving an engine without a company officer. It's interesting that employees are demanding empowerment and the ability to make choices and have more voice in their destiny, but at the same time argue that proposed

organizational changes will not work because there will not be a superior officer to oversee the crews at all times.

Should the assistant chief retain a dual role of fire marshal and operations chief? The survey of departments indicates a strong need to have an operations chief that is separate from the fire marshal. Eleven of the 13 departments (84.6%) have a separate full-time fire marshal. Three of those departments (Logan City, Park City, and West Jordan City) have made organizational changes in the last two years that created a full time fire marshal, and South Salt Lake is currently reorganizing the management structure to separate the fire marshal's position from the fire chief's position. The area of code enforcement has become highly technical, and continues to increase in technicality as prescriptive codes are replaced by performance-based codes. The demand of the fire marshal's time in administration of code enforcement, plan reviews, fire protection systems, fire investigation, inspection programs and public education programs is overwhelming. Doubling as operations chief could only be effective in an organization which includes highly motivated, competent and committed mid-level managers, but even then it is questionable if a quality performance is desired in both positions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although it is suggested that altering organizational structure may not be

the most important approach to organizational problems, and it is suggested by one battalion chief that it is “suspect that changing any schedule would improve efficiency,” it is the recommendation of this researcher that some organizational changes are in order for the Murray Fire Department. Restating a quote by David Gratz, “It is essential, therefore, that modern fire department management have an organizational structure as modern and well maintained as the newest fire apparatus” (Gratz, 1972, p. 113).

Three options for restructuring will follow, and all three are based on the following observations:

1. The battalion chief must not double as an engine company officer. This practice causes significant managerial problems and problems in communications and information dissemination. It would be better for the assistant chief to work directly with the station captains than to attempt to communicate through the additional layer of the on-duty battalion chief who is attached to an engine company. Park City found this to be the case in administration of training.
2. The need for the operations chief and the fire marshal to be two separate positions is apparent. One person cannot perform a competent, effective job at both positions. The operations chief should be investing a great deal of time in team building and planning, as it is evident that the attitudes and commitment of the employees of the fire department are vital to the success of the organization. You cannot order a person to care, nor can you order a person to be competent.

3. Although there was not a great deal of research relating to the position of training officer in this report, it appears that the training officer can be better utilized in the management structure. This position should be at least the equivalent rank of the shift commander. By being subordinate to the on-duty battalion chiefs, the training officer has difficulty in making the training program work without intervention from the assistant chief.

OPTION ONE

Eliminate the position of battalion chief at the 24-hour shift level. Create the position of Battalion Chief (one position) on an 8-hour day/40 hour week schedule.

This person would be responsible for operations. Upgrade the training officer position to battalion chief, making him equal in rank to the operations chief. The current battalion chiefs may apply for the position of operations chief or training officer, take a demotion to captain, or exercise the option they have to retire. The chief, assistant chief, battalion chief, and training chief would alternate responsibility of a “duty chief” who would respond to structure fires after regular working hours. The disadvantage to this option is the requirement of one additional employee. (See Appendix C.)

OPTION TWO

Eliminate the position of battalion chief at the 24-hour shift level. Allow current battalion chiefs the option of demotion to captain or to retire. Promote one of the deputy fire marshals to the position of fire marshal, freeing up the assistant chief

to be a full time operations chief. Promote the training officer to the rank of battalion chief and assign him to be “assistant operations chief.” The chief, assistant chief, and battalion chief would alternate responsibility of a “duty chief” who would respond to structure fires after regular working hours. The major advantage to this option is that it can be accomplished without the addition of any new personnel, and could be implemented immediately. (See Appendix D.)

OPTION THREE

Create an additional captain position on each shift, allowing the battalion chiefs to be placed on a separate command vehicle on 24-hour shifts. Promote the training officer to battalion chief and assign him to coordinate operations with the on-duty battalion chiefs. The disadvantage to this option is the requirement of three additional employees. An advantage, however, is the addition of one new employee per shift, and the addition of a promotional opportunity for three individuals. The question is whether the costs of implementation are worth the benefits. (See Appendix E.)

There are many other options which can be considered, but it is the recommendation of this researcher that either option one or option two be implemented. Both of these are likely to improve the organization, and although this project did not specifically address the captains, it is evident that much more accountability and productivity could be expected from captains with implementation of either one of these options. The captains will report directly to a

chief officer that is “plugged in” to the administration on a day to day basis.

Currently the captains frequently become frustrated with the battalion chiefs, and go directly to the assistant chief to solve problems or to obtain assistance. It is common for the battalion chiefs to instruct the captains or even the firefighters to go directly to the assistant chief, intentionally taking themselves “out of the loop.”

Fire departments can be compared to many American companies mentioned by Steven R. Covey in his book, *Principle Centered Leadership*. “They know that unless they restructure, they can’t possibly compete; yet some companies keep the same old structure, simply because “that’s the way things are done around here” (Covey, 1992, p. 167).

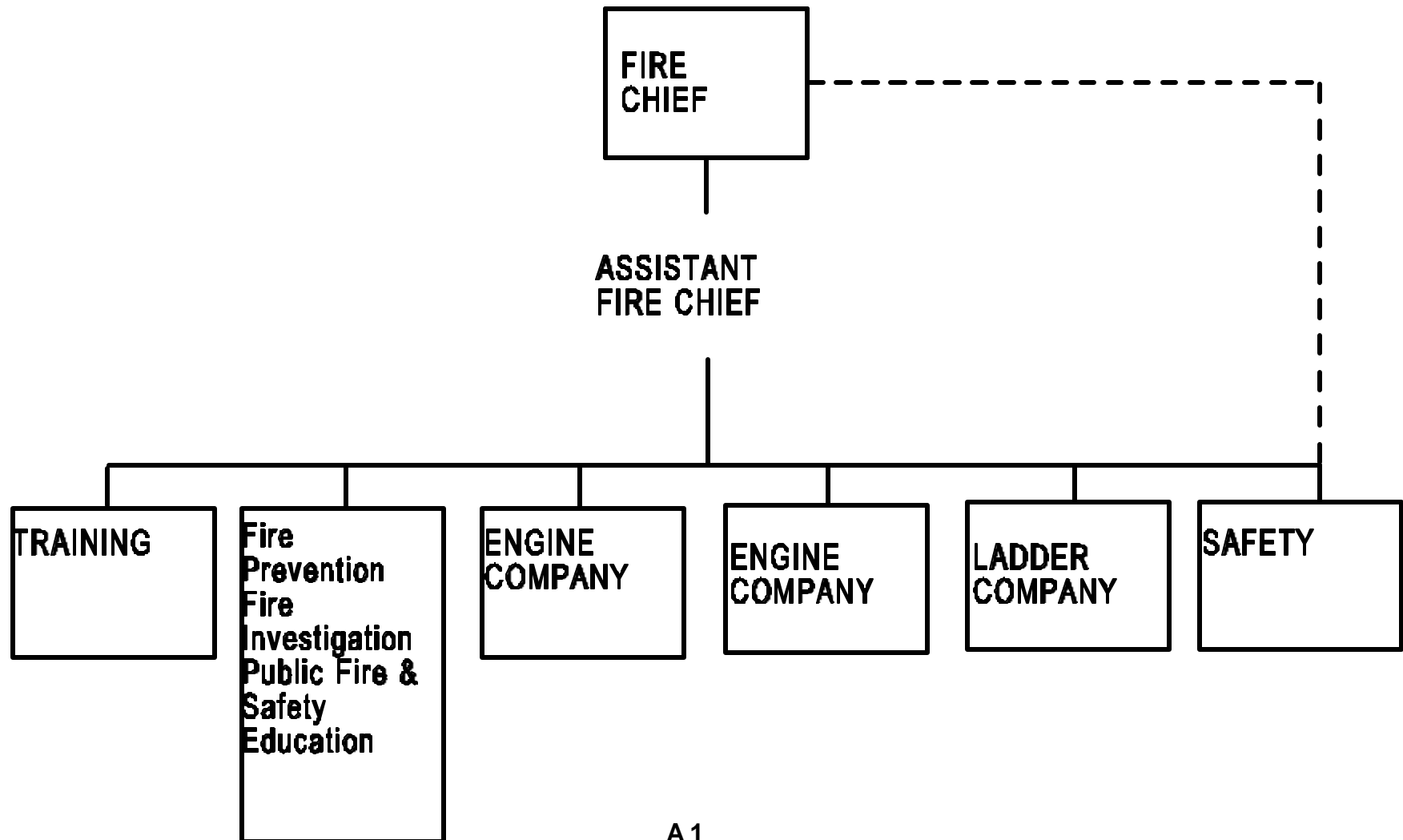
The administration of the Murray Fire Department must not be hesitant to make necessary changes in structure, while continuing training of employees in supervisory positions. It is important to shape the culture of the department in such a way that serves the citizens of the city as well as the employees of the department.

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Appendix A
Typical Organizational Structure of a Small Department

NFPA, Fire Protection Handbook, 1991, p. 9-38



Appendix B

**Initial Battalion Chief Proposal
by Assistant Chief Blair Camp**

In an effort to better utilize the Battalion Chief, and to allow more time and flexibility in performance of administrative duties, the Battalion Chief will be reassigned to a separate command vehicle, and be designated as “Battalion 8.” The Battalion Chief will no longer be assigned as an engine company officer on Engine 81. Battalion 8 will be placed in the dispatch stacking order and will respond as incident command on any multi-engine or multi-jurisdictional (except routine medical calls) response in Murray City. This will bring us in line with the way the Battalion Chief operates in Salt Lake County, Salt Lake City, West Valley and Sandy.

The Battalion Chief will now have the flexibility to visit the other stations for any purpose, such as inspection of facilities, equipment and personnel, assess the traffic situation during the I-15 reconstruction on a daily basis, coordinate and attend committee and other meetings, and to attend to other administrative duties without taking engine 81 away from their duties and out of their response area.

Also, equally important, this new structure will now assure that there will be a chief officer at each multiple engine incident. In the past, a two or three engine response, such as 82 & 83, 83 & 10, etc. had no Battalion Chief response. A recent example was the South 67 condominium fire. Two Murray engines, a Midvale truck and County Utility 10 were working a fire of which the Battalion Chief had no

knowledge. In some other cases where engine 81 responded and was first in, the Battalion Chief operating as a company officer

was on the initial attack line. The new strategy will assure a chief officer (or acting Battalion Chief) at every incident.

How can this be accomplished without additional manpower? Minimum manning will be established at three per engine plus Battalion 8 (ten per shift). Two individuals will still be allowed to take vacation, but in those cases the Battalion Chief will attempt to fill the 10th position with a part-time firefighter. If a part-time firefighter is not available, the vacancy will be filled by an overtime shift. The effect on the overtime budget will be monitored and evaluated periodically. The rules for taking vacation will likely need to be modified slightly to require more advanced notice to take vacation if there is already one individual on vacation. Double vacations could be limited to the first two picks. This issue could be studied more in-depth to determine what will work best.

The engineer on engine 81 will oversee the engine company operations when not directly under the command of the Battalion Chief. The engineer will not have the same responsibilities of a captain, however, as he will not be responsible for the station, for scheduling and planning the day, managing the inspection district, performing merit evaluations, etc. as these will be done by the Battalion Chief.

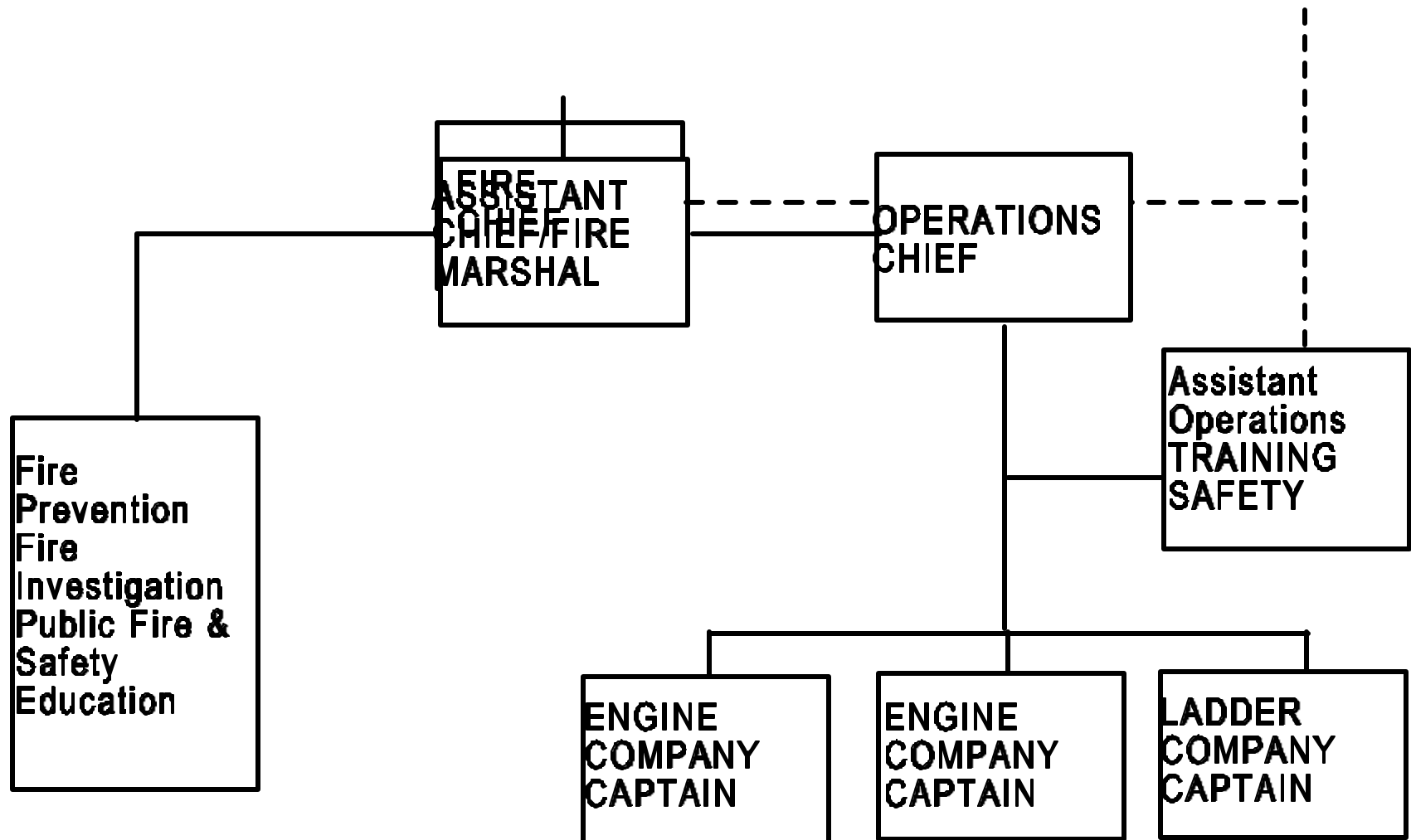
Remember, the Battalion Chief will be responding on any multiple engine calls with engine 81, or as requested by the engineer on engine 81. Battalion 8 will also be responding on any two engine responses with 82 & 83, providing additional manpower to the scene. When the Battalion Chief is on vacation or other leave, the senior captain on the shift will be the acting Battalion Chief. The captain will be familiar with the areas of responsibility of the Battalion Chief, as he will

be sharing in those responsibilities. This assures that the assignments and responsibilities

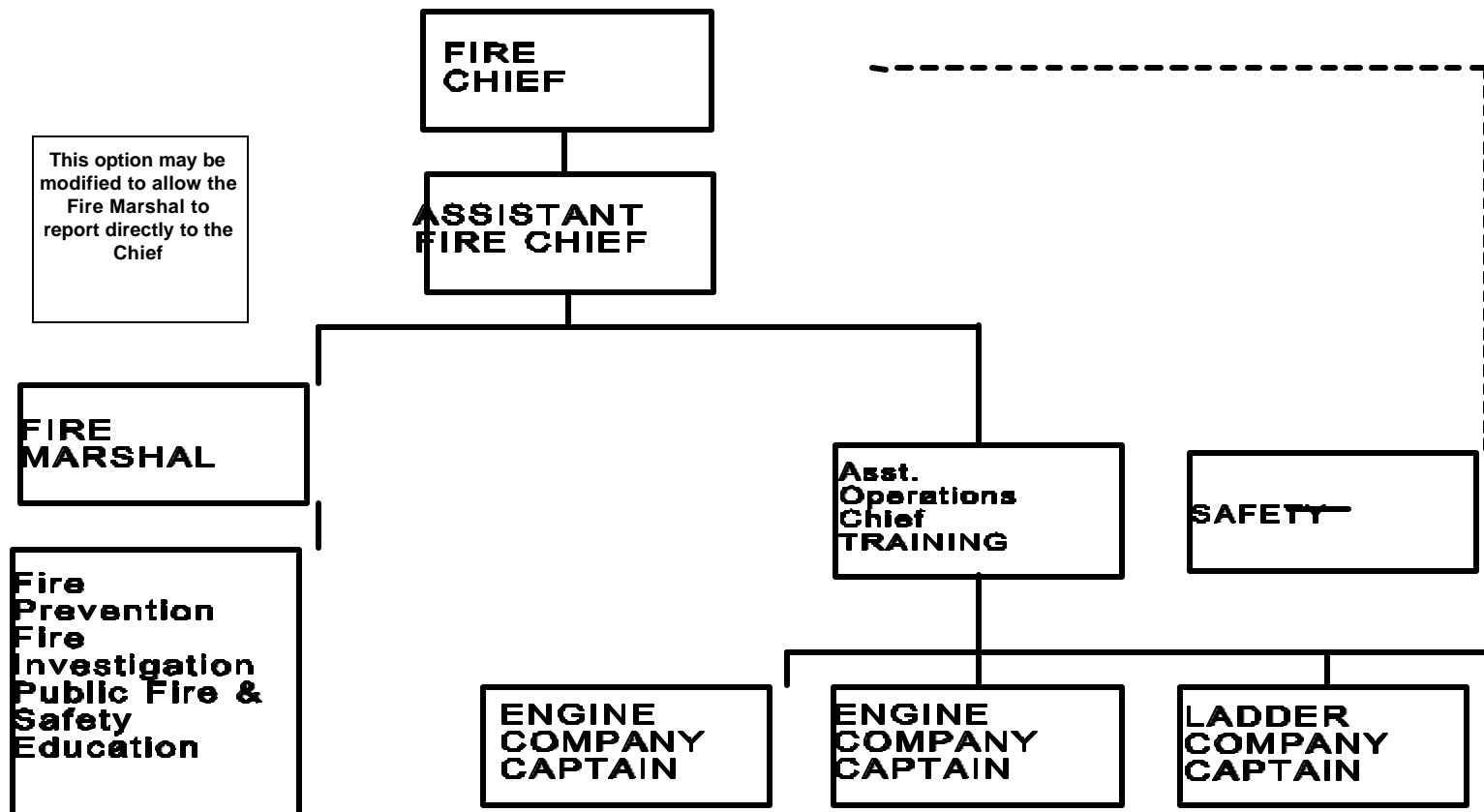
of the Battalion Chiefs will not be disrupted while they are on vacation.

It is my view that the advantages of this proposal far outweigh the disadvantages. It allows the Battalion Chiefs the flexibility that they need for administrative responsibilities, yet leaves them on shift on a 24-hour basis to attend to suppression responsibilities.

Appendix C
Proposed Organizational Chart - Option One



Appendix D
Proposed Organizational Chart - Option Two



Appendix E
Proposed Organizational Chart - Option Three

